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SUBJECT: U/S BURNS ADDRESSES SECOND BALI DEMOCRACY FORUM

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In his statement as chair of the U.S. delegation to the second Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), U/S Burns conveyed strong U.S. support for Indonesia's leadership in promoting regional democratization. The December 10-11 Forum, which was opened by President Yudhoyono and co-chair Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama, was attended by representatives from 36 Asian countries and 13 observer nations. In their remarks, both President Yudhoyono and FM Natalegawa emphasized that democracy and economic development are intertwined. Participating nations commended the open and frank discussions and expressed confidence in the BDF process of sharing experiences. The forum concluded with a call for the BDF's programming arm, the Institute for Peace and Democracy, to provide training, election visits, policy-oriented research and field studies to advance the democratic process throughout Asia. END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENT YUDHOYONO AND FM NATALEGAWA: DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT ARE INTERTWINED

¶2. (U) Both President Yudhoyono and Foreign Minister Natalegawa emphasized in their December 10 opening remarks to the second Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) that democracy and economic development are intertwined. President Yudhoyono stated that development without democracy would go limp and democracy without development would be meaningless. Yudhoyono noted that every nation has a unique historical background and process of development. Natalegawa said that the democratic process must be anchored in the rule of law in order to be sustainable. He also stressed the importance of access to information in building a sense of public participation in and ownership of democracy.

U/S BURNS: DEMOCRACY IS NOT JUST A WESTERN CONCEPT; IT IS UNIVERSAL

¶3. (U) Under Secretary Bill Burns led the U.S. observer delegation to the BDF. During his December 10 intervention at the BDF leaders' session and general debate, U/S Burns conveyed the United States' support for the BDF, and highlighted the important example that Indonesia provides for regional democratization efforts. U/S Burns underscored that core values are at the heart of every democracy, including basic human rights. He pointed out that Asian countries have/are adopting these principles, while still respecting local traditions, proving democracy is not just a Western concept; it is universal. U/S Burns discussed the evolution of democracy in the United States, and agreed with Foreign Minister Natalegawa that the BDF's greatest strength was that it brought together countries at different points in their

democratic evolution to learn from one another.

¶4. (U) U/S Burns stressed the importance of acknowledging and correcting past problems as vital to a democracy. He emphasized that strong civil societies and unfettered media are important to further develop democratic processes and can serve as the moral compass for governments. U/S Burns stressed that the United States is committed to working with new alliances and partnerships, rising powers, and developing countries in Asia to build modern political institutions that can help ensure stability and lasting prosperity.

¶5. (U) The United States hopes that the BDF, which promotes peaceful transition to democracy, can be instrumental in encouraging reform in places like Burma and in building the capacity of Asian countries to promote reform from within. The BDF, U/S Burns asserted, provides countries in the region with a historic opportunity to learn from one another, take responsibility, turn words into action, and build a future of hope and promise for their children. U/S Burns urged the BDF and its programming arm, the Institute for Peace and Democracy, to seize this opportunity by undertaking concrete actions to promote democratic reforms throughout the region.

PARTICIPANTS

¶6. (U) The second Forum, co-chaired by Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama, was attended by 36 Asian countries and 13 observer nations. (Note: As reported reftel, last year 32 Asian countries and 7 observer nations, including the United States, participated.) All of the ASEAN countries, including Burma, sent delegations as well as Afghanistan, China, India,

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Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria among others. Observer nations included the United States, Canada, Norway, Sweden and the U.K. Additionally, numerous of NGOs and think tanks from around the region participated in the December 11 interactive sessions.

OPEN AND FRANK DISCUSSIONS

¶7. (U) The participants generally agreed that democracy can take different forms and often evolves through various stages, and that this variety should be cherished and respected. They acknowledged that for this reason it was important that common features of democracy such as freedom of expression, rule of law and human rights be upheld throughout the process of democratization. The leaders underscored the need for collective efforts to intensify capacity building in the field of democracy through, inter alia, sharing of experiences and best practices in strengthening national institutions, including those involved in the election process. The leaders commended the GOI for convening a forum in which all Asian nations were invited to participate and share their concerns and experiences, regardless of their stage of democratic development.

NEXT STEPS

¶8. (U) BDF II closed with a call for the Institute of Peace and Democracy (IPD) to move forward with programs which were in line with the participants' priority areas of cooperation. Participants asked that these activities, including training, election visits, policy-oriented research and field studies to advance the democratic process in Asia, be initiated before the convening of the third BDF on December 10-11, 2010. Priority areas of cooperation focused on the link between democracy and the rule of law; and, democracy in the information age. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is hopeful that once the IPD's legal status is resolved, IPD will be able to work directly with foreign donors. (Note: Currently all IPD programs are managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. End Note.)

¶9. (SBU) COMMENT: U/S Burns' attendance at the BDF conveyed

strong, high-level U.S. support for one of Indonesia's key efforts to assume a greater leadership role in the region. GOI interlocutors expressed appreciation for this support throughout U/S Burns' visit, and for our message of support for both the Bali Democracy Forum and for Indonesia's role as a regional leader. End Comment.

¶10. (U) U/S Burns cleared this message.

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